



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

April 8, 2005

News Release

MS-13 GANG MEMBER ARRESTED BY DHS AGENTS AT CHECKPOINT *ICE and CBP agents nab MS-13 gang member at Falfurrias, Texas, checkpoint*

FALFURRIAS, Texas—U.S. Department of Homeland Security agents arrested a member of the violent Mara Salvatruchas (MS-13) gang Wednesday morning near the U.S. Border Patrol checkpoint here as part of a nationwide effort called “Operation Community Shield.”

Jose Adonis Quintanilla-Perez, 24, was one of 13 smuggled aliens traveling northbound in an SUV when a Brooks County Sheriff’s Department deputy stopped the vehicle near the checkpoint.

The SUV driver exited the vehicle and fled the scene; he is suspected of being the smuggler. The remaining illegal aliens were taken into custody by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Border Patrol agents.

During processing, Quintanilla-Perez, a Salvadoran national, was identified by his tattoos, and also admitted he was an MS-13 gang member. He told CBP Border Patrol agents he had been released from an El Salvador prison six weeks earlier after serving a five-year sentence for attempted murder.

“This arrest is an example of the heightened interdiction effort being conducted along the Southwest border,” said Joseph R. Webber, ICE Houston special agent-in-charge. “The joint efforts of ICE, CBP and the Brooks County Sheriff’s Department combine to make our borders safer.”

An ICE national initiative launched in March, called “Operation Community Shield,” is designed to disrupt and dismantle violent gang organizations and prosecute their members by employing the full range of authorities and investigative tools available. The combination of ICE’s unique immigration and customs authorities can be employed against gang members to help keep communities safer.

“Immigration laws allow ICE to detain and deport MS-13 gang members with criminal convictions or immigration violations,” said Webber. “ICE can also use its customs authorities to target narcotics smuggling and money laundering, and seize assets. Using these tools, ICE is uniquely suited to target violent gang activity by targeting its gang members.”

Another MS-13 gang member, Lester Rivera-Paz, 29, was also arrested by CBP Border Patrol agents near Falfurrias in February and has been indicted on charges of illegal re-entry after deportation. The trial is set for May 17. If convicted of this felony, Rivera-Paz could be sentenced to up to 20 years in prison.

Since Operation Community Shield was implemented less than one month ago, ICE has arrested more than 135 MS-13 gang members nationwide.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.